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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000876

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/02/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: SETTLERS RIOT IN WEST BANK AS "PRICE TAG" FOR
MINOR EVACUATIONS

REF: A. TEL AVIV 1176

[1](#)B. OSC GMP20090601748002

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Greg Marchese for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. Settlers rioted south and west of Nablus on June 1, attacking a minibus of Palestinian laborers and setting fire to dozens of acres of fields and olive trees near the villages of Burin and Jit, reportedly in response to GOI evacuations of minor outposts in the area (Ref A). Israeli authorities arrested a number of settlers and Palestinians following confrontations throughout the day. At least three smaller fires were set in the same area on June 2, but no major clashes were reported. End summary.

June 1: Six Wounded, One Seriously, in Attack on Laborers

[1](#)2. (C) Local contacts in the Palestinian villages of Jit and Burin told Poloff on June 2 that settlers from nearby outposts and settlements attacked laborers en route to job sites in Israel early in the morning of June 1. A laborer from the village of Jit showed Poloff a head wound received when settlers attacked the bus in which he was riding. Jit mayor Nasser Aiyeh Sideh said a total of six villagers were injured in the attack, including one critically, who underwent surgery and remains hospitalized. Zakaria Sideh, a field worker for Rabbis for Human Rights who lives in Jit, showed Poloff photos of the damage to the minibus, and injuries to a number of occupants.

June 1-2: Extensive Fires Damage Olive Trees and Fields

[1](#)3. (C) Burin mayor Ali Eid described "nearly 50" fires that had been started by settlers on June 1, damaging "over 1,500" olive trees belonging to Burin and Jit, as well as the villages of Far'ata and Immatin, south of the outpost of Havat Gil'ad. Eid said he had personally witnessed between 20 and 30 incidents of vandalism by, at his estimate, between 1,000 and 1,200 settlers, including those he said had been brought on buses from across the West Bank.

[1](#)4. (C) On June 2, Poloff confirmed at least eight distinct sites had been recently burned between Burin and Jit. Damage appeared significant to both fields and olive trees, but Poloff could not confirm the number of trees damaged. Each burn site appeared to vary in size from five to 25 acres. Nasser Sideh, mayor of Jit, estimated the total damage in areas surrounding Jit (excluding Burin) to be 1,000 trees covering 400 dunums (100 acres). Eid complained that Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers were present when the vandalism was taking place, but did nothing to stop it or lend assistance. "These (settlers) are criminals, supported by their government," Eid said. Press reports of four settlers arrested are "propaganda," he added, saying these reports

obscure the scope of the riots.

15. (C) While traveling in the area on June 2, Poloff observed three fires burning west of Nablus. Two fires in close proximity to one another were observed burning for at least 45 minutes. Two IDF jeeps and six or seven soldiers (but no firefighters) were present at the site. Palestinian Civil Defense personnel told PolSpec later on June 2 that they had successfully extinguished the blazes after coordinating access with the IDF in the area.

16. (U) Poloff observed, at 1400 local on June 2, a third column of smoke in the vicinity of Havat Gilad, which was not present at 1330 when Poloff was in the same area on foot.

June 2 Stabbing as Response?

17. (SBU) Press reports and local contacts said a Palestinian teenager from a village near Nablus stabbed an IDF soldier in the shoulder on the morning of June 2 at Huwarra checkpoint south of Nablus. Contacts in Burin attributed the attack to "increased aggression" felt by youth following the June 1 riots.

The "Price Tag" for Outpost Evacuations

18. (SBU) Press reports quote settlers calling the violence "part of the price tag on outpost evacuation" (Ref B). The June 1 fires were extensive and accompanied by clashes between stick-wielding settlers and rock-throwing

JERUSALEM 00000876 002 OF 002

Palestinians and resulted in a number of arrests. Poloff did not observe similar violence accompanying the more limited fires set on June 2.

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